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ABSTRACT

The predictive usefulness of certain scales of the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) may be greater than generally believed. The evaluation of one program of selection, retention and graduation of Masters-Level students determined the relationship between selection criteria and rated effectiveness. Approximately one half of the criteria employed in this process are positively and significantly related to rated effectiveness, which, in turn, is determined by having faculty and site supervisors rate each student. Questionnaires subsequently mailed to graduates and their immediate supervisors, yielded data which indicated that the program is adequate in most training areas and that competencies of the graduates are rated higher by the employer than by either graduate or faculty. (BN)

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SELECTION, RETENTION, GRADUATION - IS IT WORKING?

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(This paper was presented as the NCACES meeting in Chicago, October 6, 1978)

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Introduction

Before I describe what we are currently doing in the areas of Selection, Retention, and Graduation, it would probably be of some benefit to you to know something about where we were and what prompted our developing the procedures we now use.

For those of you unfamiliar with the University of Nebraska at Omaha (U.N.O.), we are an urban university located in a metropolis of approximately one-half million people. We have an enrollment of 15,000+ and are ranked third in NCAA Division II (football). Just 10 years ago we were a municipal institution, becoming a part of the State University of Nebraska system in 1968.

In terms of our Department of Counselor Education, at that time (1968-69), we had 2 F.T.E. faculty--only one faculty devoting full time to Counselor Education. At that time we were awarded a federal grant to train counselors for urban disadvantaged youth. Staff size grew to 5 F.T.E.

Our program continued to expand through the early '70's. Our faculty now numbers 6.5 F.T.E. with another five adjunct faculty (on-campus). During this period, our enrollment increased rapidly--being a land-grant institution and having not yet established departmental admissions criteria.

About this time, U.N.O. was reviewed by the North Central Accrediting Association. Several recommendations were made which had mostly positive impact:

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1. Some recommended adjustments were made regarding faculty load. At that time each faculty member taught 12 semester credit hours and carried approximately 25 M.S. advisees.

2. The program would be strengthened by providing on-campus laboratory facilities--for taping, observing, etc.

3. Other recommendations basically pertained to institutional support . . . graduate assistants, time given for research, operating budget monies, etc.

These recommendations were the prime movers for the development of our admissions procedures which are the focus of this presentation.

Developmental Stages

Our first step was to update our current knowledge about selection-retention practices. We did this by an extensive review of the literature and by correspondence with our colleagues from other institutions around the country. We concluded basically three things:

1. Current admission-retention practices ranged from requiring applicants to take part in a two-day admissions seminar (including marathon group counseling, taping initial interviews and various other assessments of interpersonal competence) to the relatively simple practice of meeting admission requirements to Graduate School.

2. It is generally concluded that the standard academic criteria commonly used for admission to graduate school are poor predictors of counseling performance. Such academic indices are useful in predicting other aspects of the counselor's role and function--e.g., the ability to communicate intelligently and research competencies--but they do not indicate interpersonal competence or counseling effectiveness as such.

3. Several counselor educators were themselves looking for ideas and asked us to share with them our future developments.

Armed with this information, we set about determining what we thought might be important considerations in determining the potential effectiveness of those indicating interest in obtaining a Masters Degree in Counseling. We determined these considerations to be (not in any particular order of importance):

1. How capable are they in terms of what we (in the profession) call academic aptitude and achievement?

- While it is true that there is low correlation between these variables and counseling effectiveness, it is also true that minimal levels of these qualities are necessary to succeed in graduate study.

- This information regarding academic aptitude and achievement is obtained basically from two sources:

a) We require all applicants to have completed a minimum of 15 undergraduate semester hours in the behavioral sciences with a GPA of 2.5 or better in those courses.

b) Secondly, the policy of our Graduate College is that students must take the GRE prior to or during their first semester of enrollment. So, to have information of this nature prior to determining admission status, we selected the Ohio State Psychological Examination, an untimed power test, with the intention of establishing our own normative data.

2. Another area we consider important is attitude. How rigid/flexible are they in terms of dogmatically pushing a point of view? For data of this sort we selected Milton Rokeach's Dogmatism Scale, despite the outdated aspect of some items.

3. We also thought some measure of personality would be helpful, especially data which are normed on "normal" populations. Because of the then relatively recent use of the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire and some of McClain's work, we selected this instrument.

4. Additionally, we wanted to know something of their written communication skills. And, we preferred an extemporaneous indication of this, so we pre-identified several topics which we would then randomly distribute to applicants and simply ask them to write on both sides of the page on topics like: Plato's dictum: Know Thyself; Issues involving the Family Privacy Act; Confidentiality; etc.

5. Another area we considered quite important is the personal contact and interaction we experience as applicants seek admission. To focus on this, we arrange for Group Interviews. This is somewhat of a misnomer in that we have no more than eight applicants meet with two or three faculty and a student who is maybe half way through the program... and, we simply interact for approximately an hour and one half. About the only structure provided is that one of the faculty (acting as chairperson of the interview) informs the applicants that getting to know them (applicants) is important to us as we consider the potential of each of the applicants. From there we note the interaction dynamics as they unfold. (Copy of Interview Rating Form - Appendix A)

6. Two other bits of information also seem to have relevance. We are interested in what they are presently doing and what had they done prior to coming to us. So we require two additional pieces of data:

a) We ask for a work history; and,

b) We request the names of three people to whom we can write to obtain recommendation attesting to their suitability to enter the

profession.

7. And one last interest we had originally is knowing w.ether they were going to pursue the program on a full- or part-time basis. Some preliminary data we had suggested that full-time students were both "better" (higher caliber) students/professionals; and, they also seemed to get considerably more from the program because of interaction with faculty and just general involvement.

Data Analysis

The first step in evaluating our total program of selection, retention and graduation involved determining the relationship between selection criteria and rated effectiveness. Included in Table 1 are only the significant correlations obtained on these variables. (See Appendix B.)

The data indicate three of the major considerations we give to the selection of students being significantly correlated with rated effectiveness. It should be noted that only 5 of the 16 factors comprising the 16PF show a significant (positive) relationship with rated effectiveness. Data which is not reported typically reflects a positive relationship though not significant.

To obtain rated effectiveness, two forms are used. The Performance in Practices/Practicum Form (Appendix C) is given to faculty teaching one or both of these courses and the field supervisor of the student. Mean ratings are then computed for each student. A second form to assess student behavior during the course of his program is given to every faculty member who has had sufficient contact with a student to rate him on these criteria. (See Appendix D.) Again, mean ratings are then computed for each student.

Because the 16PF data revealed but five scales showing a significant correlation with rated effectiveness, a study was conducted to investigate the relationship between 16PF scores (McClain's Predicted Effectiveness Score), scores on selected scales of the POI and rated effectiveness. (See Tables 1 and 2--Appendix E and F.) It is to be noted that a fifth index (the mean of the standard scores of these five scales) is presented. This index was generated because of the controversy concerning item overlap, conscious and unconscious faking of responses and Shostrom's own admission of nonindependence among the scales.

The data in Table 1 show a significant negative relationship between McClain's predicted effectiveness score for males and the POI-T_c scale. Two of the remaining five correlations are negative while the other three are positive. The predicted effectiveness score for females shows a negative relationship with four of the six POI scales, and two positive correlations, none of which is significant.

The relationship between effectiveness, as judged by Practicum and Overall Ratings, and the POI scales indicates eight of the ten correlations to be positive and significant at the .05 level or beyond. The exceptions are with the POI-SAV scale; these correlations are positive, though not significant.

The data in Table 2 present the relationship between predicted effectiveness scores for males and females and ratings of effectiveness. All correlations are negative but nonsignificant.

These preliminary findings suggest that there may be more predictive usefulness associated with certain scales of the POI than is currently indicated by our findings using 16PF data.

Follow-up Data

It was determined that while we had data relative to our selection procedures and rated effectiveness at the point of graduation, additional information was necessary to determine if both selection and training were contributing to actual job competence. A survey-type questionnaire was developed (see Appendix G) and sent to 394 graduates during the years 1971-1976. As part of this evaluation, respondents were asked to identify their immediate supervisor. In turn, we sent questionnaires to these people and, in addition, every faculty member in the department completed the instrument. Returns were received from 65% of the graduates, 70% of the supervisors and 100% of the faculty. Faculty completed only the competency portion of the questionnaire.

The findings are presented directly on the questionnaire (Appendix G). Where 1972 data are noted, these reflect findings of a similar study conducted then.

The findings can be generally summarized by saying there is a fairly high degree of satisfaction with the program content; staff are rated 3 or better (on a 5-point scale--5 high) on their instruction; the competencies required are generally viewed as important; and, job supervisors see our "products" as being better prepared than either our graduates or faculty do.

Summary

This paper focuses on the criteria used by one Counselor Education program to select, admit and retain Masters-level students. Approximately one half of the criteria employed in this process are positively and significantly related to rated effectiveness.

Rated effectiveness is determined by having faculty and site supervisors rate each student on two forms. One form assesses performance specific to Practices/Practicum. The other measure is an indication of faculty impressions of each student as he goes through the entire program.

A follow-up study was conducted (Spring, 1977) to determine program effectiveness. A questionnaire was mailed to students graduated during the period 1972-1977. Those responding identified their immediate supervisors, who in turn completed the same instrument. Additionally, faculty in the department responded to just the competency portion of the questionnaire.

Findings suggest the program to be adequate or above in most areas. Competencies of the graduates were rated higher by the employer than by either the graduates or the faculty.

APPENDIX A

U.N.O. - Counselor Education Department

Interview Rating Criteria Form

Instructions:

The chairman of the committee will introduce the purpose of the interview as an opportunity to observe (applicants) acting, reacting and interacting with each other. This is to be relatively brief and unsophisticated, but done each time.

Immediately following the interview, each interviewer rates each applicant on the following ten criteria using a rating scale of 0 to 4, with 4 being high.

These ratings are given to the chairman. He tallies the ratings, computes a mean and completes the Interview Report Form. The IRF is given to Rich Blake and the separate interview rating sheets are given to Scott Harrington.

1. Student shows ability to handle ambiguous situation constructively (lacks defensiveness, no withdrawal, attempts to provide structure, etc.).
2. Student's overall interview behavior lacks defensiveness.
3. Student's verbal expression is consistent with his emotional experience (congruence).
4. Student engages in self-disclosure in a healthy, constructive way.
5. Student's involvement in with here-and-now instead of past and future reality; student uses "I" instead of "you" or "one," thereby owning his own feelings.
6. Student shows genuine enthusiasm in group interaction.
7. Student is attentive and responsive to each member's interaction; responds to more than surface expressions of others in the group.
8. Student exhibits clear, effective self-expression in verbal exchanges.
9. Student's verbal content lacks rigid, authoritarian, judgemental attitudes.
10. Student assumes responsibility for his actions and acknowledges others' responsibility for their actions.

APPENDIX B

Table 2

Correlations (significant only) of Certain Admission Criteria With Rated Effectiveness in Practices/Practicum and Professional Behavior (N = 200)

Admissions Data	Practices/ Practicum	Professional Behavior
GRE - V	.27***	.27***
GRE - Q		.16***
16PF Scale		
B		.23*
E	.27*	
F		.19*
G	.20*	
H	.28**	.26**
M	.22*	.32**
Rokeach		.26**

* = p<.05

** = p<.01

*** = p<.001

APPENDIX C

UNO - Counselor Education Department Rating Form
for Student Performance in Practices and Practicum

Directions: Rate each student using the following criteria on a scale of 1 to 9 (9 being high).

1. Student uses attending behaviors effectively (eye contact, posture, etc.).
2. Student is capable of responding to content and affect at the interchangeable level at minimum, at the additive level preferably; student responds to other's frame of reference and not the counselor's need to know."
3. Student displays spontaneity and a sense of humor; he is a person and does not play the "professional" role.
4. Student demonstrates ability to initiate a counseling session, identify client's needs, take constructive action, and terminate.
5. Student shows enthusiasm and willingness to learn improved counseling skills without defensiveness toward supervisors or peers.
6. Student shows good judgement in using tests, information resources, referral procedures, and colleagual consultation.
7. Student behaviorally demonstrates concern for the ethical responsibilities of the profession (not sending standardized test results by mail, maintaining confidentiality, no professional misrepresentation, etc.).
8. Student can give genuine positive and negative responses to others in a constructive manner.
9. Student does not use counselor role to satisfy his own needs at other's expense; student keeps personal problems out of counseling relationship.

10. Student appears to be genuine and authentic in all interactions outside and inside the counseling relationship.

APPENDIX D

UNO - Counselor Education Department Rating Form
for Impressions of Student Behavior During Degree Program

Directions: On the basis of your contact with students in the program, rate each student on the following criteria on a scale of 1 to 9 (9 being high).

1. Student uses attending behaviors effectively (eye contact, posture, etc.).
2. Student is capable of responding to content and affect at the interchangeable level at minimum, at the additive level, preferably; student responds primarily to the other's frame of reference and not to the "counselor's need to know."
3. Student displays spontaneity and a sense of humor; he is a person and does not play the "professional role."
4. Student demonstrates ability to initiate a counseling session, identify client's needs, take constructive action, and terminate.
5. Student shows enthusiasm and willingness to learn improved counseling skills without defensiveness toward supervisors or peers.
6. Student shows good judgement in using tests, informational resources, referral procedures, and colleagual consultation.
7. Student behaviorally demonstrates concern for ethical responsibilities of the profession (not sending standardized test results by mail, maintaining confidentiality, no professional misrepresentation, etc.).
8. Student can give genuine positive and negative responses to others in a constructive manner.
9. Student does not use counselor role to satisfy his own needs at other's

expense; student keeps personal problems out of counseling relationship.

10. Student appears to be genuine and authentic in all interactions inside and outside the counseling relationship.
11. Student values personal and professional growth beyond the pragmatic need for the degree.
12. Student demonstrates effective interpersonal skills in interaction with colleagues.
13. Student's initiative for own professional learning shows more than a textbook orientation in casework and internship.
14. Student demonstrates competence with guidance aspects beyond counseling (orientation, appraisal, occupational and educational information, etc.).

APPENDIX E

TABLE 1

Correlations of Selected Personal Orientation Inventory Scales

Against McClain's Predicted Effectiveness Scores and UNO Rating Scales (N=41)

Prediction Scores and Rating Scales	POI Scales					
	Tc	I	SAV	FR	Sa	M
P E S - M (N=23)	-.37*	.03	.21	.40	-.15	-.00
P E S - F (N=18)	.01	-.10	-.24	.38	-.17	-.06
Practicum (All)	.29*	.45**	.23	.43**	.33*	.46**
Overall (All)	.36**	.50**	.22	.43**	.42**	.53**

* = p .05

** = p .01

APPENDIX F

TABLE 2

Correlations of McClain's Predicted Effectiveness Scores

Against UNO Practicum and Overall Rating Scales

McClain Scores	Practicum Rating	Overall Rating
P E S - M (N=23)	-.31	-.33
P E S - F (N=18)	-.07	-.10

APPENDIX G

TABLE I

1. Date of Graduate or completion of Guidance Endorsement requirements _____.

2. Age: $\bar{X}$ = 34.5 Mode = 30 Median = 32.7 Range 23-59

3. Sex: Male 51% Female 49%

4. Master's Degree in which area of specialization?

   Agency 33% Elementary 14% Coll. Stud. Pers. 9% Secondary 42%

   Gerontology 2%

5. Were you a full time 32% or part time 67% student in the Counseling Program?

6. Presently employed: Full time 86% Part time 6% Unemployed 8%

   If not employed, skip question 9.

   If employed, please state number of employer _____

7. Employed in Guidance or Counseling position? Yes 62% No 38%

   If no, are skills learned in the Counseling Program helpful in your present activities? 96% - Yes

8. Briefly describe position: _____

   _____

   _____

9. If you are not presently employed in the field in which you took your advanced program, why not?

   63 I did not intend to enter the field

   33 Poor pay in the field

   6 Disliked the field

   42 Am continuing graduate education

92 Could not find a position due to the job market

9 Unsuccessful in that field

18 Found more challenging career

12 Left for marriage/family

55 Other_____

10. What primarily motivated you to attend UNO's Counseling and Guidance Department, rather than that of another university? (You may check more than one.)

1 Quality of educational experience

12 Only program offered in this area

8 To study under a particular professor

33 Influence of friends or other professionals

126 Proximity to your home

114 Financial consideration

33 Other (Specify) _____

TABLE II
Guidance Program Evaluation

The following is a list of subject areas covered in the Counseling and Guidance program at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Please evaluate the effectiveness of these subject areas as you experienced them at the University. Indicate your evaluation by circling the appropriate number. This evaluation applies only to the Master's or Endorsement Program. Rate the subject area as follows: 5 = Extremely Valuable, 4 = Quite Valuable, 3 = Some Value, 2 = Worth Having, 1 = No Value, 0 = N/A Not Taken.

	X (1977)	X (1972)	5	4	3	2	1	0
Principles of Guidance	3.74	3.69	23%	38%	31%	7%	2%	17
Introduction to Counseling Theories	4.22	4.17	44	39	12	4	1	6
Organization and Admin. of Guid. Services	4.00	4.00	33	41	21	3	2	129
Occupational & Educational Information	3.39	3.84	17	30	32	19	3	37
Appraisal Techniques in Counsel. & Guid.	3.68	3.96	20	42	27	7	4	12
Counseling Practices	4.35	4.47	58	26	11	3	2	9
Counseling Practicum	4.60	4.57	73	20	3	3	1	10
Group Techniques in Guidance	3.78	3.74	33	33	19	9	6	38
Community Involvement for Urban Counselors	3.86	4.44	33	29	28	8	1	156
Counseling Elementary School Children	3.87	4.19	28	43	21	6	2	208
Fed 801-Introduction to Research	3.35	3.67	17	28	32	18	5	27
Fed 818-Mental Health	3.22	----	16	24	33	19	8	123
Other Courses, please specify:								

_____

_____

List three courses or professional experiences which you believe were most

helpful during the program.

_____	_____	_____
Most important	Second most important	Third most important

What new/additional courses or experiences would you suggest for the program?

_____

TABLE III
Staff and Instruction

The following is an inventory of the adequacy or inadequacy of certain aspects of the Counselor Education Program at UNO. According to your judgement, rate the items on a five-point scale with a score of "5" indicating that the statement represented a highly adequate aspect of your education at UNO, "4" above average in adequacy, "3" average, "2" below average in adequacy, "1" an inadequate aspect of your education. For each statement, please circle the number which best reflects your choice.

	1977 $\bar{X}$	1972 $\bar{X}$	5	4	3	2	1
1. Flexibility within the curriculum to allow for individual differences.	3.69	3.60	21%	40%	27%	9%	2%
2. Instructional quality in all aspects of the program.	3.63	3.42	8	54	31	6	1
3. Availability of staff for assistance on an individual basis.	4.08	3.85	40	36	18	5	2
4. Integration of formal instruction, seminars and supervised experiences.	3.45	3.48	11	39	36	11	3
5. Intellectual stimulation by faculty members in the classroom.	3.64	3.48	12	48	33	6	1
6. Intellectual stimulation by fellow students.	3.46	3.60	9	42	36	10	2
7. Intellectual stimulation by faculty members in informal settings.	3.63	3.57	20	40	26	10	4
8. Opportunities for self-evaluation and development of deeper self-understanding	3.89	3.75	32	37	21	9	2
9. Staff continuing contact with students after they leave the program.	2.73	2.72	8	17	32	25	18
10. Staff competence in subjects taught.	3.96	3.86	23	52	21	3	--
11. Class size as a facilitator of learning and student interaction.	4.05	4.05	32	45	19	4	--
12. Staff's promotion of growth and mental health of graduate students.	3.65	3.53	22	38	28	9	4
13. Opportunity for improvement of interpersonal relationships in small group activities.	3.52	3.35	20	30	34	13	3

14. Your freedom to try your own ideas in Counseling Practicum.	3.84	3.78	33	33	22	10	3
15. Practicum experience in group work or process.	3.19	3.16	18	26	25	19	12
16. Helpfulness of University Practicum instructor in Counseling Practicum.	3.98	----	40	31	20	6	4

17. Rate your general degree of satisfaction with the following: Rate 1 - 5 (1 = lowest)

a. 3.67 Administration within the program.

b. 3.67 Advising system within your program.

c. 3.82 Instruction in Counseling and Guidance Department courses.

d. 3.30 Instruction in courses outside the department.

e. 3.59 Course content in your program.

TABLE IV

Importance of Counselor Competencies

In this section, please make two responses to each of the items listed. First, respond by indicating how important you believe the competencies are with 4 being most important and 1 being least important. Second, respond by circling the number which you believe best describes your level of competency in the listing area with 4 being most competent and 1 being least competent. Try to answer every question.

	Graduates 1977		Counselor Educators		Job Supervisors	
	Mean	Rank Order	M	RO	M	RO
1. Interpreting the role of the counselor to others.	3.56	(3)	3.71	(4.5)	3.30	(10)
2. Determining guidance objectives.	3.46	(7)	3.71	(4.5)	3.48	(7)
3. Orienting students and parents to the guidance program.	3.47	(6)	3.43	(9)	3.23	(11)
4. Counseling individuals.	3.92	(1)	4.00	(1)	3.90	(1)
5. Counseling groups.	3.53	(4)	3.71	(4.5)	3.53	(5)
6. Planning and coordinating client appraisal program.	3.10	(12)	3.28	(11)	3.13	(12)
7. Identifying clients in need of special services.	3.66	(2)	3.71	(4.5)	3.68	(2)
8. Conducting and assisting in research.	2.56	(13)	2.86	(12.5)	2.49	(13)
9. Assisting in providing placement services for clients (including classroom placement).	3.40	(8.5)	2.86	(12.5)	3.46	(8)
10. Interpreting information about clients to others.	3.30	(11)	3.43	(9)	3.63	(3)
11. Assisting clients in vocational and educational planning.	3.50	(5)	3.71	(4.5)	3.61	(4)
12. Providing clients with information about the world of work.	3.31	(10)	3.71	(4.5)	3.43	(9)
13. Relating to culturally or economically disadvantaged persons.	3.40	(8.5)	3.43	(9)	3.51	(6)

TABLE V

Correlations of Ratings Between Groups on Importance of Competencies		Level of Competencies
Graduates with Counselor Educators	.76	.81
Graduates with Job Supervisors	.90	.94
Counselor Educators with Supervisors	.70	.82

TABLE VI

Perceived Level of Counselor Competencies

	Graduates 1977		Educators		Supervisors		Graduates 1972	
	Mean	Rank Order	M	RO	M	RO	M	RO
1. Interpreting the role of the counselor to others.	3.26	(2.5)	3.00	(3)	3.37	(7)	3.20	(3)
2. Determining guidance objectives.	3.07	(7)	2.86	(6)	3.40	(6)	3.14	(5)
3. Orienting students and parents to the guidance program.	3.06	(8)	2.71	(8.5)	3.36	(8)	3.01	(8)
4. Counseling individuals.	3.46	(1)	3.14	(1)	3.64	(1)	3.44	(1)
5. Counseling groups.	2.74	(11)	2.57	(10)	3.34	(9)	2.55	(11)
6. Planning and coordinating client appraisal programs.	2.72	(12)	2.86	(6)	3.10	(12)	2.48	(12)
7. Identifying clients in need of special services.	3.26	(2.5)	2.71	(8.5)	3.51	(2.5)	3.06	(7)
8. Conducting and assisting in research.	2.28	(13)	1.71	(13)	2.74	(13)	2.20	(13)
9. Assisting in providing placement services for clients (including classroom placement).	3.14	(5)	2.43	(11)	3.30	(11)	3.11	(6)
10. Interpreting information about clients to others.	3.22	(4)	2.86	(6)	3.51	(2.5)	3.15	(4)
11. Assisting clients in vocational and educational planning.	3.11	(6)	3.00	(3)	3.49	(4)	3.26	(2)
12. Providing clients with information about the world of work.	2.96	(10)	3.00	(3)	3.32	(10)	2.98	(9)
13. Relating to culturally or economically disadvantaged persons.	3.02	(9)	2.00	(12)	3.42	(5)	2.92	(10)
14. Overall, how well do you feel your experience in your program prepared you in your field?								

Responses to Question 14:

	Mean	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Inadequate	Not at all Prepared
Graduates	3.93	21%	54%	22%	3%	-
Counselor Educators	4.00	14	71	14	-	-
Job Supervisors	4.27	42	48	6	4	-